

Housing Numbers Topic Paper (April 2026)



**Submission Harborough District Local Plan
2020-2041**

1. Purpose and Context

1.1 This Topic Paper provides the justification for the quantum of housing and supply within the Harborough Local Plan (2020–2041). It explains how housing need has been assessed, how the proposed requirement has been derived, and how the Plan responds to national planning policy and the evidence base prepared to support plan-making.

1.2 The paper demonstrates how the submission local plan aligns with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), and how it meets the tests of soundness set out in paragraph 35 of the NPPF (2023): that the Plan is positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

1.3 The submission local plan therefore seeks to deliver the homes required to meet local and strategic needs while ensuring that growth is directed to sustainable locations supported by infrastructure, services and public transport.

1.4 The evidence base underpinning the housing elements of the submission plan includes the Housing and Economic Needs Assessment 2022 (HENA), Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment 2024 (SHELAA), the Leicester and Leicestershire Statement of Common Ground (2022), the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2024/25) and the Council's Authority Monitoring Reports.

1.5 The Local Plan covers the period 2020–2041, providing a 21-year planning horizon that aligns with the evidence base and allows sufficient time for the delivery of strategic allocations and supporting infrastructure.

2. Key Evidence Studies

2.1 The housing strategy of the Harborough Local Plan (2020–2041) is supported by a comprehensive and proportionate evidence base. The principal studies are summarised below.

Housing and Economic Needs Assessment 2022 (HENA) HSG-NLP 2 and associated Housing Distribution Paper 2022 HSG-NLP3

2.2 The HENA and associated housing Distribution Paper provides evidence of housing need and apportionment on unmet need for Harborough District and the Housing Market Area (HMA). Prepared jointly for the Leicester and Leicestershire HMA, it assesses demographic trends, household formation, migration, affordability, and market signals using the Standard Method prescribed by the NPPF (2023). It identifies the Local Housing Need (LHN) for each authority, confirms that forecast employment growth can be accommodated without an uplift to housing numbers, and quantifies the unmet housing need arising from Leicester City.

Leicester and Leicestershire Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) SCG-NLP3 – June 2022 and Housing Distribution Paper (2022) HSG-NLP3

2.4 The SoCG confirms agreement between HMA authorities on the scale of housing need, the approach to unmet need arising from Leicester City, and its distribution across the HMA. For Harborough, it confirms a proportionate contribution of 123 dpa to Leicester's unmet housing need over the period 2020–2036, aligned with infrastructure capacity and sustainable growth locations. This demonstrates effective compliance with the Duty to Cooperate. A further joint statement, signed by

Leicestershire County Council and all seven district and borough authorities, confirms that for local plans progressing under the transitional arrangements in paragraph 234 of Annex 1 of the December 2024 NPPF, the scale and distribution of provision for unmet needs set out in the 2022 SoCG remain valid and in force.

Development Strategy Paper - February 2025 PRE-NLP4

2.7 The Development Strategy Paper provides the spatial rationale for the distribution of housing growth across the district. It considers settlement hierarchy, sustainability, accessibility, and environmental constraints, and sets out the evidence basis for the Plan's hybrid spatial strategy, combining strategic allocations, extensions to key centres, and managed rural infill.

Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) S-NLP8 and Five-Year Housing Land Supply Statement – October 2025 HSG-NLP10

2.8 Housing delivery is monitored annually through the AMR, which tracks completions, permissions, windfall delivery, and progress against the housing trajectory. The Five-Year Housing Land Supply Statement (October 2025) provides an up-to-date assessment of deliverable supply at 31st March 2025 in accordance with the NPPF.

3. Housing Need and Requirement

Standard Method and Transitional Arrangements

3.1 The Local Housing Need (LHN) for Harborough District has been established using the Government's Standard Method for assessing housing need, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023 and the associated Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). The Standard Method provides a starting point for establishing minimum housing requirements, based on household projections and workplace-based affordability ratios. As confirmed by PPG paragraph 004 (ID: 2a-004-2024), it represents a starting point only and authorities may plan for a higher number.

3.2 The housing requirement in the submission local plan has been derived using the Standard Method (from the NPPF 2023) and a contribution to meeting unmet need from neighbouring Leicester City - as agreed in the Leicester & Leicestershire Statement of Common Ground (June 2022) SCG-NLP3. The NPPF 2023 standard method produced an LHN of 534 dwellings per annum for the District (11,214 homes 2020-41). The SoCG June 2022 apportioned an additional 123 dpa of unmet need to the District from Leicester City between 2020 and 2036 (1,968 homes). The SoCG 2022 and associated Housing Distribution Paper (2022) (HSG-NLP3) covers the timescale to 2036 because it aligns with the plan period of Leicester City's Local Plan (adopted March 2026) and associated detailed evidence of their capacity. The Harborough Submission Local Plan Policy DS01 therefore identifies a housing requirement of 13,182 (2020-41) which equates to an average of 628 dpa over the 21 year plan period.

3.3 During plan preparation, the Government revised the Standard Method in the December 2024 NPPF. This produced a local housing need figure for the District of 723 dwellings per annum in December 2024. However, paragraph 234 of Annex 1 to the December 2024 NPPF provides transitional arrangements for plans in preparation at the time. Transitional arrangements explain the relevant previous

version of the NPPF will apply for plan-making purposes where “the plan has reached Regulation 19 (pre-submission stage) on or before 12 March 2025, and its draft housing requirement meets at least 80% of local housing need” (paragraph 234(a)). Both conditions are satisfied in Harborough’s case:

- Harborough’s Regulation 19 consultation was published on 10 March 2025, before the 12 March 2025 deadline; and
- Policy DS01 sets a housing requirement of 13,182 over a 21 year plan period (2020-41) which equates to an average of 628 dpa representing 87% of the updated LHN of 723 dpa when the NPPF 2024 was published.

3.4 Accordingly, and in line with paragraph 235 of the December 2024 NPPF, the Plan will be examined under the NPPF December 2023, including the 2023 Standard Method for calculating LHN.

Local Housing Need Calculation

3.5 Applying the 2023 Standard Method, Harborough’s LHN is 534 dwellings per annum. The calculation is based on the 2014-based household projections as adjusted by the workplace-based affordability ratio. Table 3.1 sets out the key inputs.

Table 3.1: Local Housing Need Calculation – 2023 Standard Method

Component	Figure
2014-based household projection baseline – change in households (dpa)	377
Affordability Ratio (2020/21)	42%
Local Housing Need (2023 Standard Method)	534 dpa

3.6 The Local Plan is based upon a local housing need of 534 dpa (derived from the 2023 Standard Method, consistent with the transitional arrangements described above).

Housing Requirement

3.9 In accordance with national policy and guidance, the housing requirement comprises local housing need for the district plus a proportionate share of unmet need from neighbouring Leicester City (Note: Leicester City is the only authority to declare an unmet need under the NPPF 2023 standard method as set out in the L&L SoCG 2022 SCG-NLP3). The total housing requirement for the plan period is set out in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: Housing Requirement Calculation – Harborough District (2020–2041)

Component	Dwellings
Local Housing Need (534 dpa × 21 years, 2020–2041)	11,214
Unmet Need from Leicester City (123 dpa × 16 years, 2020–2036, per SoCG 2022)	1,968
Total Housing Requirement	13,182
Annual requirement 2020–2036 (LHN + unmet need)	657 dpa
Annual requirement 2036–2041 (LHN only)	534 dpa

3.10 The Submission Draft Local Plan establishes a stepped housing requirement comprising 657 dpa between 2020 and 2036, reducing to 534 dpa between 2036 and 2041. In this respect it is ‘frontloaded’ with a higher requirement in the first 16 years and a lower requirement for the last 5 years.

3.11 The stepped housing requirement is considered to be justified. The L&L SoCG (2022) SCG-NLP3 apports an additional 123 homes per year between 2020 and 2036 to Harborough District (i.e. 1,968 homes in total) to help meet Leicester’s unmet need. This aligns with the plan period of Leicester’s Local Plan which has recently been adopted (26th March 2026) based on a comprehensive assessment of capacity over the 2020-36 period.

3.12 Leicester City is one of the 20 biggest cities/urban areas in England. It is the most sustainable location for growth in the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area (HMA) with significant potential for brownfield development opportunities compared Harborough District. It offers the greatest potential to optimise the use of land by building at higher density and has the greatest diversity of services/facilities as well as significant existing infrastructure serving the wider HMA (including universities, colleges, hospitals and sustainable transport networks). Identifying urban capacity is particularly difficult to do over long timescales as it is difficult to predict what new opportunities (including brownfield redevelopment opportunities) may become available in the medium/long term.

3.13 It is not considered appropriate to accommodate unmet need beyond 2036 in the absence of a full and comprehensive assessment of capacity over this timescale. Moving unmet need from a large city to a rural district like Harborough in the absence of a full and comprehensive review of Leicester’s capacity post 2036 is therefore not considered to be justified. It could result in an unsustainable pattern of growth across the HMA contrary to the NPPF.

4. Unmet Housing Need of Leicester City

4.1 Neighbouring Leicester City Council has an unmet housing need because there is insufficient land available in its area to meet its own housing need in full. In September 2020 the City published a Draft Local Plan for public consultation which indicated a potential unmet housing need of about 8,000 homes. Immediately after the consultation closed, the NPPF 2020 increased the number of homes by 35% for the 20 biggest cities (including Leicester) to meet its national target to build 300,000 homes per year by the mid-2020s and help regenerate cities. This added a further 10,000 homes to Leicester's housing need between 2020 and 2036. Providing for this number of additional homes in the City would have required more than a doubling of the housing allocations set out in their Draft Local Plan (regulation 18) consultation.

4.2 The City's evidence therefore showed it would not be possible to meet their housing need in full and their Regulation 19 Plan (January 2023) identified an unmet need of 18,700 homes between 2020 and 2036 (which has now been confirmed in the recently adopted Leicester City Local Plan 2020-36 March 2026). In this context, it is necessary to agree a Statement of Common Ground across the Housing Market Area (HMA) to deal with this matter. The NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to work with neighbouring authorities and requires plans to be:

- Informed by agreements, so unmet need is accommodated where practical to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable development.
- Based on effective joint working on cross-boundary matters (like the City's unmet need) that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by a statement of common ground.

4.3 To meet NPPF requirements, the Leicester and Leicestershire authorities jointly commissioned independent consultants to prepare a Housing Distribution Paper (June 2022) (HSG-NLP3) setting out an evidence-led approach to apportioning Leicester's unmet housing need to neighbouring authorities including Harborough District. This evidence informed a Leicester & Leicestershire Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) (SCG-NLP3) apportioning Leicester's unmet housing and employment needs to the surrounding Districts/Boroughs from 2020 to 2036.

4.4 The starting point for this work was each authority's Local Housing Need figure which for Harbough was 534 homes per year (calculated in 2022). Taking into account various factors, including the District's functional relationship with Leicester (migration and commuting) and the alignment of the number of jobs and homes, this evidence suggests Harborough's housing requirement should be increased above LHN by 123 homes (23%) per year to 657 homes for the period 2020-36 to help meet Leicester's housing need. This aligns with Leicester City's adopted local plan period (March 2026) and associated evidence justifying their capacity, and therefore the timeframe over which unmet need has been evidenced.

4.5 The agreed distribution of Leicester's unmet need across HMA authorities is set out in Table 4.1, reproduced from the SoCG.

Table 4.1: Distribution of Leicester's Unmet Housing Need across the Leicester & Leicestershire HMA (2020–2036)

Authority	Local Housing Need (dpa)	Redistributed Housing Provision (dpa)	Increase (dpa)
Leicester City	2,464	1,295	—
Blaby District	341	687	346
Charnwood Borough	1,111	1,189	78
Harborough District	534	657	123
Hinckley & Bosworth	472	659	187
Melton Borough	231	300	69
North West Leicestershire	372	686	314
Oadby & Wigston	188	240	52
Total – Leicestershire HMA	5,713	5,713	1,169

Source: Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area Statement of Common Ground (June 2022).

4.6 Harborough’s unmet need contribution of 123 dpa (1,968 homes over 2020–2036) forms part of a collaboratively agreed distribution derived from the jointly commissioned evidence and an agreed SoCG. The Council considers this evidence provides a robust and sound basis for the housing requirement in the submission local plan.

4.7 The Housing Distribution Paper (2022) (HSG-NLP3) and SoCG 2022 (SCG-NLP3) has provided a robust basis for two recently adopted Local Plans in Leicester & Leicestershire HMA:

- Charnwood Local Plan 2021-37 (adopted January 2026); and
- Leicester Local Plan 2020-36 (adopted March 2026)

4.8 Like Harborough, this evidence apportioned some of the City’s unmet housing need to Charnwood Borough. Paragraph 103 of the [Inspectors Report \(Jan 2026\)](#) says:

“The proposed distribution of the unmet need set out in the Housing Distribution Paper (Exam 45) follows a logical approach and has been informed by relevant factors, including the functional relationship between Charnwood and Leicester City in relation to jobs and commuting between the two authority areas. That evidence would support an apportionment of 78 dpy to Charnwood.”

4.9 The report goes on to recommend Main Modifications to reflect the 78 dwelling per year apportionment in the SoCG 2022 as justified by the Housing Distribution Paper 2022.

Unmet Need Beyond 2036

4.10 At the time of writing (April 2026) Leicester City Council has not formally declared or quantified an unmet need in the period beyond 2036. Although they anticipate declaring soon, quantifying an unmet need beyond their current plan period (2036) will require new NPPF and PPG compliant evidence that will inform their next Local Plan. Given the Leicester Local Plan 2020-36 was adopted on 26th March 2026, quantifying an unmet need through their plan-making process is likely to be some way off.

4.11 That said the new standard method for calculating housing need introduced by the NPPF 2024 significantly changed housing need for authorities across the HMA, including Leicester City which had a substantial drop in LHN compared to the 2023 standard method. There are a number of authorities in the HMA preparing plans for submission before 31 December 2026 that will be examined against the new LHN figures from the NPPF 2024. To support authorities preparing plans under the NPPF 2024 an Updated Housing Distribution Paper (Nov 2025) and associated Statement of Common Ground (December 2025) SCG-NLP18 has been prepared.

4.12 The Council has agreed a statement of common ground with Leicester City (SCG-NLP24) setting out the position between the two authorities. Harborough District Council considers it inappropriate to use the Updated Housing Distribution Paper (2025) and associated SoCG (2025) (SCG-NLP18) as a basis for informing the amount of unmet housing need in the submission local plan as it is based on the NPPF 2024 and not the NPPF 2023 that the submission local plan will be examined against. The SoCG, December 2025 confirms that, for local plans progressing under the 2023 NPPF or within the transitional arrangements in paragraph 234 of Annex 1 of the December 2024 NPPF the SoCG 2022 (SCG-NLP3) remains valid.

4.13 Under the NPPF 2024 the city's unmet need is substantially lower than the NPPF 2023 because the LHN is much lower. The Harborough submission local plan therefore provides for a greater amount of unmet need during the plan period than it would need to under the NPPF 2024 and the Updated Housing Distribution Paper and associated SoCG.

4.14 The Harborough Local Plan incorporates flexibility to accommodate potential future redistribution requirements through:

- Headroom of around 16% above the housing requirement;
- Policy mechanisms enabling an early plan review if the HMA identifies additional redistribution needs.

5. Plan Period

5.1 The Local Plan covers the period 2020–2041. A base date of 2020 is justified as it aligns with a number of key evidence documents informing the plan, including; the Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (2022) (HSG-NLP2); the Housing Distribution Paper (2022) (HSG-NLP3); the Employment Distribution Paper (2022) (EMP-NLP2); and the L&L SoCG (2022) (SCG-NLP3). It also aligns with the start of the Leicester City Local Plan Period and associated evidence on capacity and unmet need. A base date of 2020 has therefore been informed by the evidence and associated joint working on cross boundary strategic matters. This alignment is a key component of collaboration and supports a coordinated and effective cross-boundary approach meeting housing and employment needs across the HMA and FEMA.

5.2 The end of the plan period extends to 2041 to meet the requirements of the NPPF and enable a continued, plan-led approach to meeting the district’s own needs longer-term.

5.3 At the point of anticipated adoption (2026), the Plan will provide a period of approximately 15 years, consistent with national policy expectations. While adoption in early 2027 would marginally reduce this period, the difference is not material and does not affect the Plan’s ability to plan positively for long-term development needs.

6. Housing Supply

Overall Supply Position

6.1 The latest Housing Trajectory is set out in the Proposed Modifications (S-NLP15) submitted alongside the draft local plan. Against the total housing requirement of 13,182 dwellings (2020–2041), the Council has identified deliverable and developable sites sufficient to meet the requirement over the plan period. The housing requirement will be met through new local plan allocations, a small villages requirement, a windfall allowance, commitments (extant planning permissions and neighbourhood plan allocations), and completions since the beginning of the new plan period (1 April 2020). Table 6.1 sets out the overall supply position.

Table 6.1: Housing Supply Position – Harborough District (2020–2041), as at March 2025

Supply Component	Dwellings
Completions (April 2020 – March 2025)	4,214
Commitments (31 st March 2025)	4,238
New Local Plan allocations	6,072
Small Villages Requirement	350
Windfall allowance (45 dpa, 2031–2041)	450
Total Supply	15,324

Supply Component	Dwellings
Total Plan Period Requirement	13,182
Supply contingency (supply less requirement)	2,142

Completions (2020–2025)

6.2 Since the start of the plan period in April 2020 to March 2025, the District has recorded cumulative completions of 4,214. Annual completions by year are set out in Table 6.2. This shows a steady decrease in annual completions from the peak of over 1,000 in 2020/21 and 2021/22, which resulted from the build out of high numbers of permissions granted in the period prior to adoption of the Local Plan in 2019 when the District was not able to demonstrate a five year housing land supply. Since the earlier peak years, annual completions have declined reflective of broader economic and market conditions.

Table 6.2: Annual Completions – Harborough District (2020–2025)

Year	Net Completions	Cumulative Total
2020/21	1,010	1,010
2021/22	1,026	2,036
2022/23	929	2,965
2023/24	758	3,723
2024/25	491	4,214
Total / Average	4,214 (avg. 843 dpa)	

Source: HDC Authority Monitoring Report (2024-25)

Commitments and Neighbourhood Plan Allocations

6.3 As at March 2025, the District has extant planning permissions for 4,015 dwellings (net) on sites not yet commenced or under construction. In addition, Neighbourhood Plans across the district allocate a further 223 dwellings on sites not yet subject to planning permission. Together, these commitments provide a significant component of the near-term supply pipeline and are reflected in the five-year housing land supply assessment.

Local Plan Allocations

6.4 The Submission Local Plan allocations comprise a mix of sites of all sizes to maintain sufficient supply of homes across the plan period. This includes large strategic sites allocations at Land South of Gartree Road and proportionate extensions to Market Towns and large and medium villages. The phasing and

delivery of these allocations is set out in the housing trajectory, which demonstrates that sufficient supply will come forward across the plan period to maintain a deliverable and developable supply of housing land.

Supply Contingency

6.5 Table 6.1 above indicates an oversupply or contingency of 2,142 homes (16%) above the requirement of 13,182 homes. The supply of homes comprises a mix of sites of all sizes across the district and a contingency of this scale is considered reasonable to ensure the 13,182 home requirement is achieved over the plan period should unforeseen circumstances arise.

Monitoring and Review Mechanism

6.6 Policy IM01 and paragraph 9.10 of the Submission Local Plan establishes a clear and robust monitoring framework to assess housing delivery and overall supply against the identified requirement. Performance will be monitored annually through the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR), which will track key indicators including net housing completions, progress against the housing trajectory, five-year housing land supply, and the delivery of strategic allocations and windfall development. This approach is consistent with national guidance and best practice, whereby monitoring frameworks use a range of indicators to assess whether plan objectives are being achieved and whether policies remain effective.

6.7 Policy IM01 also sets out specific triggers for intervention where delivery falls below expected levels, including consideration of additional measures to support delivery and, where necessary, a partial or full review of the Local Plan. This ensures that the Plan remains responsive to changing circumstances and provides an effective mechanism to address under-delivery in a timely manner, consistent with national policy requirements on maintaining housing supply and delivery performance.

7. Five-Year Housing Land Supply

7.1 The Council's Five-Year Housing Land Supply Statement (31 October 2025) provides an updated assessment of deliverable sites in line with the December 2024 NPPF. At present, for decision-making purposes supply must be measured against the current Standard Method figure which as of March 2026 is 747 dpa, in accordance with the December 2024 NPPF. This differs from the plan-making requirement of 657 dpa, reflecting the distinct roles of the two exercises under the transitional arrangements.

7.2 The 5 year housing land supply statement published on 31st October 2025 applied the NPPF 2024 LHN figure of 771 dpa (735 + 5% buffer), the 5 year requirement was for 3,857 dwellings. Against this, the Council could demonstrate 2,401 deliverable dwellings, equating to 3.1 years of supply. While this represents a temporary shortfall, it should be noted that:

- Completions since 2020 have substantially exceeded the annual requirement, building up a significant over-supply against the plan period requirement to date.
- Any shortfalls are compounded by the introduction of the new Standard Method in December 2024 (723 dpa), compared to the previous standard method (510 dpa).
- The housing trajectory demonstrates that supply will increase substantially from 2028/29 onwards should the local plan be adopted.

7.3 The Council continues to engage proactively with developers, landowners, and infrastructure providers to ensure timely delivery. Annual housing delivery is monitored through the Authority Monitoring Report, and the Local Plan’s policy framework (see paragraph 9.10 of the Plan) provides mechanisms to respond to under-delivery.

Table 7.1: Five-Year Housing Land Supply Summary (as of 1st April 2025)

Local Housing Need (735 dwellings per annum + 5% buffer calculated 09.07.25)	771 dwellings per annum (rounded)
5-Year Housing Land Supply Requirement	3,857 dwellings (rounded)
Total completions, 01 April 2024 to 31 March 2025	491 dwellings
Projected deliverable supply, 01 Apr 2025 to 31 Mar 2030	2,401 dwellings
Housing Land Supply (years), 01 Apr 2025 to 31 Mar 2030 Calculation: 2,401 / 771 = 3.1	3.1 years (rounded)

Source: Harborough District Council 5 Year Housing Land Supply Statement (Published 31 October 2025).

9. Summary and Conclusions

9.1 The Harborough Local Plan (2020–2041) presents a robust, justified, and evidence-led housing strategy that meets the district’s identified needs in full while contributing to wider strategic housing objectives within the Leicester and Leicestershire HMA.

9.2 The housing requirement is established through a stepped trajectory: 657 dpa from 2020–2036 (reflecting local housing need plus the agreed contribution to Leicester City’s unmet need) and 534 dpa from 2036–2041 (local housing need only), totalling 13,182 dwellings over the plan period. This is firmly grounded in the HENA (2022), the SoCG (June 2022), and the 2023 Standard Method.

9.3 The Plan's qualifying status under the transitional arrangements in paragraph 234(a) of the December 2024 NPPF has been clearly established. The Regulation 19 stage was reached on 10 March 2025 and the housing requirement exceeds 80%. The Plan will accordingly be examined under the 2023 NPPF framework.

9.4 The housing supply evidence, including the SHELAA, housing trajectory, and Five-Year Housing Land Supply Statement (October 2025), demonstrates that the requirement is deliverable across the plan period. Completions since 2020 average 843 dpa, significantly exceeding the plan requirement. While the five-year supply position currently stands at 3.1 (measured against the monitoring figure of 735 dpa), the trajectory demonstrates that commitments, completions and planned growth will restore and exceed the five-year requirement from 2026-2027.

9.6 In conclusion, the Harborough Local Plan provides a sound, positively prepared, justified, and effective approach to housing delivery. It balances growth with infrastructure capacity, environmental protection, and climate responsibility, ensuring that Harborough continues to be a sustainable, prosperous, and resilient district through to 2041 and beyond.